

**Experimental and Alternative Programs of
Collegiate Preparation for California
Teachers and Other Educators**

Commission on Teacher Credentialing

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Analysis of State Laws Governing Experimental Programs and Alternative Programs

California state laws include several requirements and restrictions that govern teacher education programs. The Commission on Teacher Credentialing has proposed to repeal all of these legal requirements and restrictions, without success. State laws also authorize the Commission to approve experimental and alternative programs for prospective teachers and other educators. Experimental and alternative programs for prospective teachers can legally depart from the statutory restrictions and requirements that govern other teacher education programs.

Senate Bill 148 (Chapter 1355 of the Statutes of 1988) did not repeal or amend the legal requirements and restrictions that constrain teacher education programs. SB 148 (Bergeson) also did not repeal the law that governs experimental and alternative programs. As a consequence, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing continues to exercise the authority to approve experimental and alternative programs that depart from the restrictions and requirements that affect other teacher education programs.

Education Code Section 44273 authorizes the Commission to approve experimental and alternative programs for prospective teachers and other educators. This statute exempts experimental and alternative programs of teacher preparation from the following restrictions and requirements that apply to "conventional" programs.

- Experimental and alternative programs of professional preparation for teachers are not restricted to the equivalent of one year or less of full time study. These programs can be longer than one-fifth of a five-year course of study.
- In experimental and alternative programs of professional preparation, student teaching and other field experiences need not comprise at least one-half of the required coursework.
- Experimental and alternative programs of professional teacher preparation need not include at least nine semester units of professional education courses. They could include fewer than nine units in professional education.
- In experimental and alternative programs of teacher preparation, field experiences need not be equivalent to one semester of full-time study.
- Experimental and alternative programs of teacher preparation need not include study of alternative methods of reading instruction.
- In experimental and alternative programs of teacher preparation, prerequisites to student teaching need not be restricted to nine semester units of professional education courses. These prerequisites may exceed nine semester units.
- In experimental and alternative programs of teacher preparation, public institutions may legally deny admission to applicants who do not possess baccalaureate degrees.

- In experimental and alternative programs of teacher preparation, instructors who regularly teach methods courses need not participate actively in elementary or secondary schools.

Another provision of Education Code Section 44273 exempts the graduates of experimental and alternative programs from the requirement that they verify their knowledge of subject matter, either by passing an examination adopted by the Commission or by completing a "waiver" program of subject matter preparation that has been approved by the Commission. Because the preparation of teachers in the subjects to be taught is so critical, the Commission does not dispense with it, even among the graduates of experimental and alternative programs. To the contrary, the Commission encourages colleges and universities to develop experimental and alternative programs that begin to repair the separation of subject matter coursework from professional preparation, which has been a result of the Ryan Act of 1970.

Experimental and alternative programs are not exempted from the legal requirements that candidates take the basic skills proficiency test (the CBEST) prior to admission, or that candidates obtain certificates of clearance prior to student teaching.

Perhaps the most significant provision of Education Code Section 44273 is that

The Commission shall accept only those (experimental and alternative) programs which it finds, by resolution entered in its minutes, to have merit and the potential of improving the quality of service authorized by the credential.

In summary, when a college or university proposes to offer an experimental or alternative program of professional teacher preparation, the Commission may legally waive many of the restrictions of state laws that constrain conventional programs, but only after a careful analysis of the proposals' merit and the potential of improving the quality of service in the schools.

Past Policies and Practices of the Commission Related to Experimental and Alternative Programs

In 1978 the Commission adopted guidelines for the development and approval of experimental programs of professional preparation. The Commission distributed these guidelines and encouraged colleges and universities to develop experimental programs for approval under the terms of Education Code Section 44273.

During the next seven years, colleges and universities proposed fourteen experimental programs for the Commission to approve. The Commission approved all fourteen proposals. During the same period, partial drafts of several other experimental program proposals were received by the Commission's staff, but the sponsoring institutions did not complete these additional proposals.

Some of the Commission's 1978 guidelines for experimental programs related to the use of institutional and community resources in program development, and to the evaluation of program effectiveness by sponsoring institutions. These guidelines were essentially the same as guidelines for nonexperimental programs.

The Commission guidelines related to professional competencies and field experiences were substantially different from those for other programs. To fulfill these guidelines, an institution was required to provide statements or descriptions of:

- the purposes of the program;
- the anticipated value of the program to teacher education;
- the experimental or research hypotheses that guided the program design;
- the methodology and procedures of the program;
- the program's objectives, and the relationship of these to the Commission's competency guidelines for other programs;
- how the program departs from the Commission's regular program requirements;
- the criteria to be used in evaluating candidates' skills and knowledges
- the procedures to be used in evaluating the program; and
- the reporting procedures by which the results of the program were to be communicated to the Commission.

Prior to 1986, the Commission also adopted policies regarding the reporting obligations of institutions that operated experimental programs, the term of approval of experimental programs, the renewal of such approval, and the award of credentials to candidates who complete experimental programs after their approval expires. These policies required institutions to report annually on experimental programs, and to present a final report of each completed experiment. The Commission's staff was required to present an annual report about all experimental programs to the Commission. Specific conditions in which an experiment could be extended were enumerated, as were the conditions under which credentials were granted to candidates who complete expired programs.

On many occasions since 1978, Commissioners have affirmed and reaffirmed their desire to encourage experimentation in teacher education, and their willingness to consider experimental and alternative programs. In 1986, the Commission thoroughly re-examined its own policies to determine how they might be shaped to encourage greater experimentation that would contribute to knowledge of educator preparation, and to innovation that would contribute to greater diversity in educator preparation.

**The Commission's 1986 Analysis of
Its Prior Policies and Practices
Related to Experimental and Alternative Programs**

In 1986 the Commission's professional staff sought to determine why the response to the experimental program option has been disappointing. Discussions of this issue among Commissioners and staff members, combined with correspondence and conversations with education professors and deans, led to the following explanations.

- (1) The Commission's guidelines for experimental programs allowed institutions to depart from the "regular" program requirements of the Commission. However, from 1978 until 1986 the Commission did not clearly communicate the extent to which experimental programs can depart from the requirements of laws that govern nonexperimental programs. As a consequence, most institutions conceived of experimental programs within the restrictive framework of laws that apply only to nonexperimental programs.
- (2) The requirement that institutions indicate how an experimental program departs from the Commission's regular requirements had a "chilling" effect on some institutions that might otherwise propose experimental programs. Similarly, the requirement that institutions identify the relationship between a program's objectives and the Commission's regular competency guidelines was interpreted by some institutions to mean that the Commission expected experimental programs to pursue the same competency objectives as regular programs.
- (3) With the exceptions noted above, the Commission's guidelines for documenting experimental programs were generally reasonable, particularly in light of the legal requirement that institutional proposals to establish experimental programs be "supported by detailed data and justification" (Code Section 44273a). However, the documentation requirements were seen as formidable in many institutions where there were few incentives for faculty to spend time and energy developing innovations in teacher education.
- (4) The lack of guidelines for alternative programs had the effect of highlighting the adopted guidelines for experimental programs, which emphasized the importance of a research design for each proposed program. The Commission in 1986 realized that guidelines for alternative programs could serve to stimulate innovation if (a) the guidelines did not emphasize the need for a carefully controlled experimental design, and (b) the Commission communicated clearly the extent to which alternative programs may depart from the requirements and restrictions of state laws.

**Policy Principles Underlying the 1986 Redesign of
Experimental and Alternative Program Policies
by the Commission on Teacher Credentialing**

In 1986 the Commission redesigned its own experimental and alternative program policies in keeping with the following policy principles and purposes.

- (1) In order to encourage innovation and diversity while adhering to standards of excellence in educator preparation, the Commission adopted policies that encourage colleges and universities to develop alternative programs that depart from the Commission's own standards for "conventional" programs, while adhering to standards that are conceived and proposed by the sponsoring institutions, and that are at least equal to those of conventional programs of professional preparation.
- (2) The Commission affirmed its intent to approve alternative programs that adhere to alternative standards whenever the Commission finds, on the basis of staff analysis of program proposals, that the alternative programs "have merit and the potential of improving the quality of service authorized by the credential," as required by Education Code Section 44273.
- (3) The Commission decided to determine whether a proposed alternative program has "merit" on the basis of an analysis of the standards of program quality that the sponsoring institution develops as part of the program proposal. Whether the program has "the potential of improving the quality of service authorized by the credential" would be determined on the basis of an analysis of the standards of program effectiveness that the institution submits as part of the proposal.
- (4) While encourage institutions to develop alternative programs, the Commission decided also to encourage (but not require) institutions to design programs that link subject matter coursework with professional preparation.
- (5) The Commission decided to encourage and approve experimental programs in order to resolve significant questions, to test novel hypotheses, or to pursue "high-risk-high-gain" objectives in professional preparation. The Commission decided to continue to emphasize the importance of research designs in experimental programs, and to continue to require annual reports of research findings. However, the Commission in 1986 repealed the 1978 guidelines that discouraged experimentation.
- (6) The Commission decided that it would approve experimental programs that adhere to experimental standards whenever the Commission finds, on the basis of staff analysis of program proposals, that the experiments "have merit and the potential of improving the quality of service authorized by the credential."

- (7) The Commission also decided to determine whether a proposed experimental program has "merit" on the basis of an analysis of the care with which the experiment has been designed to address fundamental issues in professional preparation. Whether a program has "the potential of improving the quality of service" would be determined on the basis of an analysis of the potential "payoff" in professional competence if the proposed experiment succeeds (with less regard for the prospect that the experiment will not succeed).
- (8) The Commission also decided to adopt policies to provide for (a) a smooth transition for programs that were previously approved as experimental programs, and (b) responsible options for institutions that began to develop experimental program proposals prior to the adoption of the new experimental standards.

Prior to their adoption by the Commission, the policy principles and purposes outlined above were discussed by participants in six Regional Conferences on the Redesign of Program Evaluation, which the Commission conducted throughout the state in January, 1986. The same principles and purposes were also discussed in several other professional meetings, including meetings of the Commission's Advisory Panel on the Redesign of Program Evaluation. Participants and contributors generally responded very favorably to the prospect of new policies to govern experimental and alternative programs. They expressed no reservations about the prospect that "merit" and "the potential of improving the quality of service" would serve as criteria for approving and evaluating experimental and alternative programs.

Standards and Policies of the Commission Regarding Experimental and Alternative Programs of Educator Preparation

The following standards and policies were adopted by the Commission on November 7, 1986.

Standards for Approving Experimental Programs

Standard 1. Research Questions, Hypotheses or Objectives

The postsecondary institution submits one or more research questions, hypotheses or objectives that relate to fundamentally significant issues in the selection, preparation or assessment of prospective professional educators.

Rationale. Experimental programs should address questions that are basic and important in the field of educator preparation. Programs that examine peripheral or insignificant issues may be approved on the basis of the Commission's standards for nonexperimental programs.

Definitions. A "research question" is an interrogative statement that is to be resolved by operation of the experimental program. A "research hypothesis" is a prediction that is to be tested by operating the program. A "research objective" is a statement of purpose that is to be achieved by operation of the program. A "fundamentally significant issue" is one whose resolution could eventually lead to structural, philosophical or methodological changes in educator preparation. "The selection, preparation or assessment of prospective professional educators" is defined to encompass all matters related to the future of professional school personnel.

Standard 2. Research Design.

The postsecondary institution submits a research design that would clearly resolve the research questions, test the hypotheses, or attain the objectives in the course of operating the program.

Rationale. An experimental program could employ a variety of research designs or methodologies. Whatever the approach, the proposal must clearly show that the program, if put into operation, would resolve the research questions, test the hypotheses or achieve the objectives. Without this showing, the Commission would have little reason to expect the experiment to yield the knowledge it seeks to generate.

Definition. "Research design" is a statement that (a) describes all aspects of the research methodology in detail, including the selection, assignment, treatment and assessment of candidates, and (b) explains how the experiment will generate the anticipated knowledge or results. "Research design" is not restricted to "experimental designs" that employ experimental groups and control groups.

Standard 3. Potential for Improved Service

The postsecondary institution submits a research proposal that shows clearly that the knowledge generated by operating the experimental program could eventually and generally improve the quality of service authorized by the credential.

Rationale. An experimental program could show that an innovation does or does not "work", or that a novel idea is or is not "true". Any of these outcomes would characterize a "successful" experiment, because they would add to human knowledge of professional preparation. Before approving an experiment, the Commission should determine that the "payoff" from a "successful" experiment could eventually lead to improvements in the preparation of professionals generally.

Standards for Approving Alternative Programs

Standard 1. Program Merit and Quality.

In each essential domain of an educator's preparation, the alternative program is represented by a set of standards that characterize the program as one of high educational merit and quality.

Rationale. To be approved as an alternative program of educator preparation, the program must address each essential domain of professional preparation, and must be represented by a set of high standards of educational merit and quality.

Definitions. "Standards" are statements submitted by the sponsoring institution that relate to the essential domains of educator preparation, and that define the level of quality at which the program will be operated continually by the institution. "Essential domains of educator preparation" include the resources, design, governance, field experiences, and institutional evaluation of a program. The phrase "merit and quality" refers to the level of excellence that characterizes each essential domain of educator preparation.

A Program that Satisfies this Standard is one in which the standards of program quality that are included in the program proposal have educational merit that is generally equivalent or superior to the Commission's standards of quality (Categories I through IV) for programs that are not experimental or alternative programs.

Standard 2. Program Effectiveness.

In each essential domain of professional competence, the alternative program of educator preparation is represented by a set of standards of professional competence and verification whose levels of quality are directly related to the length of the program.

Rationale. An alternative program must address the essential domains of professional competence. Its standard of competence and verification must be directly related to the overall length of the program, in order to assure an effective use of the state's educational resources.

Definitions. "Essential domains of professional competence" are the categories of skills and knowledge in which professionals are expected to be proficient in order to practice competently. "Standards of professional competence" are statements submitted by the sponsoring institution that relate to the essential domains of professional competence and that define the level of proficiency at which candidates will be expected to perform prior to being recommended for credentials. "Standards of professional verification" are statements that define the care with which the institution will assess and verify that each candidate achieves each standard of professional competence prior to being recommended for certification. "Length of program" is defined as the number of academic credit units, and the contact hours of field experiences, that candidates would be required to complete in order to be recommended for credentials.

A Program that Satisfies the Standard is one in which the standards of professional competence and verification are equivalent or superior to the Commission's standards of candidate competence and verification (Category V) for programs of conventional length. If the program is to be longer than conventional programs, its standards of professional competence and verification are superior to the standards in Category V for programs of conventional length.

Standard 3. Integration of Pedagogy and Subject Matter.

The Commission recommends but does not require that alternative programs that lead to Multiple or Single Subject Teaching credentials be designed to integrate the delivery of pedagogical preparation with the delivery of subject matter preparation over the entire period of each candidate's initial preparation as a teacher.

Rationale. Teachers use a combination of subject matter knowledge and pedagogical knowledge in every lesson they teach. To be able to use these tools most effectively, teachers should learn them in conjunction with each other, rather than separately and independently from each other.

Definitions. "Recommends" means that this standard is adopted by the Commission as nonmandatory advice to institutions. By referring to "programs that lead to Multiple or Single Subject Teaching Credentials," this advisory standard relates only to alternative programs that lead to these credentials. "The delivery of pedagogical preparation" refers to the courses and field experiences that are designed to impart pedagogical knowledge, understanding and skill. "The delivery of subject matter preparation" refers to the coursework that candidates complete in order to know and understand the subjects that their credentials will authorize them to teach. "Integration" refers to sets of planned links that are designed to interrelate pedagogical and content knowledge and competence in each candidate's repertoire.

Policies Regarding Experimental and Alternative Programs of Educator Preparation

The Range of Credentials that May be Earned in Experimental and Alternative Programs

- (1) An experimental or alternative program may lead to the award of any teaching or services credential that has been established in statutes or regulations. An experimental or alternative program for prospective elementary or secondary teachers may serve as a subject matter preparation program, or a professional preparation program, or a combination of these two program types. The Commission has no statutory authority to approve programs that lead to "experimental credentials." Statutory basis: Education Code Section 44273.

Legal Preconditions for the Approval of Experimental and Alternative Programs

- (2) A college or university that proposes an experimental or alternative program of educator preparation shall not admit candidates to the program prior to its approval by the Commission. Statutory basis: Education Code Section 44273 (b).
- (3) A college or university that operates an experimental or alternative program of educator preparation for Single Subject Teaching Credentials shall not allow any candidate to assume daily teaching responsibilities until the candidate obtains a certificate of clearance from the Commission which verifies the candidate's personal identification. Statutory basis: Education Code Section 44273 (d).
- (4) A college or university that operates an experimental or alternative program that leads to credentials for which passage of the state basic skills proficiency test is required shall require each California resident who applies for program admission to take this test. The institution shall require each out-of-state applicant to take this test no later than the second available administration date following the applicant's enrollment in the program. In either case, the institution shall use the results of the test to ensure that each admitted applicant receives appropriate academic assistance to prepare the candidate to pass the test. Statutory basis: Education Code Section 44252 (f).

**Preconditions Established by the Commission for the
Approval of Experimental and Alternative Programs**

- (5) To be approved by the Commission as an experimental or alternative program of educator preparation, the program must be proposed by an institution that is fully accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.
- (6) To be approved by the Commission, an experimental or alternative program of educator preparation must be proposed by an institution that makes all personnel decisions without considering differences due to gender or ethnicity. These decisions include decisions regarding the employment, retention or promotion of employees.
- (7) To be approved by the Commission as an experimental program of educator preparation, the program proposal must (a) demonstrate that the program will fulfill all of the experimental program standards adopted by the Commission, and (b) include assurances that the institution will submit annual reports and a final report that comply with the Commission's reporting requirements.
- (8) To be granted preliminary approval by the Commission as an alternative program of educator preparation, the program proposal must include verification that practitioners in the credential category have participated meaningfully in the design and development of the program's philosophical orientation, education goals and content emphases.
- (9) To be granted preliminary approval by the Commission as an alternative program of educator preparation, the program proposal must (a) set forth standards of program quality and effectiveness that have been adopted by the college or university, and that satisfy the Commission's Standards 1 and 2 for alternative programs, and (b) include assurances that the institution will cooperate in an evaluation of the program by an external team or a monitoring of the program by a Commission staff member within four years of the initial enrollment of candidates in the program.
- (10) To be granted continued approval by the Commission as an alternative program of educator preparation, the program must continually satisfy the standards of program quality and effectiveness that have been approved for the program by the Commission. Satisfaction of program standards is determined periodically by the Commission on the basis of an evaluation that utilizes the Commission's standard design for evaluating programs, or an alternative design approved by the Commission.
- (11) To be granted continued approval by the Commission as an experimental or alternative program of educator preparation, the institution must respond to all requests by the Commission for data regarding program enrollments and completions within the time limits specified by the Commission.

Reporting Requirements for Experimental Programs

- (12) Each institution that operates an experimental program that has been approved by the Commission shall forward an annual report of the program by June 15 of each year.
- (13) Each institution that operates an experimental program that has been approved by the Commission shall forward a final report of the program by June 15 of the final year in which the program has been approved to operate.
- (14) Each annual report and final report will satisfy guidelines adopted and disseminated by the Executive Secretary.
- (15) The professional staff will present an Annual Report on Experimental Programs to the Commission each year in August or September. At that time, the Commission will reconsider the status of any experimental programs for which annual reports have not been received or have not satisfied the Executive Secretary's guidelines.
- (16) The Commission does not normally appoint external teams to evaluate experimental programs of professional preparation at a college or university. The Commission may do so, or may direct a staff person to monitor or evaluate an experimental program, if the Commission determines that questions regarding the program need to be resolved.

Terms of Approval of Experimental Programs

- (17) The Commission approves experimental programs for a term of three years, unless the Commission finds, on the basis of a rationale that is included in the program proposal, that a term longer than three years is needed for the institution to complete the experiment.
- (18) The Commission extends the approval of an experimental program if (a) the institution has met all reporting requirements of the Commission, and (b) the institution shows during the final year of the initial period of approval that additional time is needed for the institution to complete the experiment.

Status of Completed Experimental Programs

- (19) After an institution completes and reports an experimental program, the Commission determines, on the basis of the program's results, whether to (a) amend the standards of the Commission for conventional programs in the same credential category as the experimental program, or (b) introduce legislation to amend or repeal any statute(s) that may prevent the program from being approved as a conventional program, or (c) adopt neither of these measures. If the Commission amends its standards on this basis, the institution may obtain approval of the program as a conventional program without the submission of a new proposal to the Commission. If neither the Commission's standards or state statutes are amended on this basis, the institution may obtain approval of the program as a conventional program or an alternative program by submitting a proposal that fulfills the preconditions for conventional or alternative programs.